

“CONTEND EARNESTLY...”

Jude instructed men to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints” (v. 3). There are many men now living—quite a number of whom are members of the Lord’s true church—who hold that it is simply not Christ-like to contend for the faith. But this passage corrects that erroneous claim. To “contend earnestly for the faith” is to strive in combat, to engage in a fight, and such like, and, since *earnestly* carries the idea of intensification, it is clear that Jude 3 teaches that men are to fight with great intensity for the Truth and against error.

Obviously, this does not mean that Christ wants men to engage in petty quarrels. He does not wish that men should wrangle for the sake of strife. Such activity must grow out of a heart that is filled with selfishness, haughtiness, and pride. But one can be humble, loving, kind, and deeply concerned for the cause of Christ and for the souls of men while fighting desperately for the Truth of the Gospel. Jesus did. Peter did. Paul did. And so did many other faithful men during New Testament days. And so have many men who have lived in our day.

Of course, there are many people who have a perverted sense of love and kindness and a distorted sense of what it means to be Christ-like. Such people are severely critical of those who spend most of their lives in doing what the Holy Spirit, through Jude, enjoins men to do. But faithful men must not allow themselves to be intimidated into becoming unfaithful no matter how unpleasant the criticism of liberal, modernistic thinkers may become.

Rather, one must remember not only such persons as Jesus, Peter, and Paul, but also men such as Stephen, who disputed with the Jews and put them to rout by his arguments which proved that what he was preaching was really true (Acts 6:9–10; 7:51–60). Stephen spoke very strongly and argued cogently. Yet, it seems hardly likely that any mere man loved his audience more than did he. Even as men were stoning his life’s blood from him, Stephen prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). This writer challenges any man to show greater love.

In spite of the pseudo-optimistic attitude of many people, there are teachers of false doctrine in this world and there are doctrines being taught which will cause those who believe and obey them to be lost (2 The. 1:7–9). There are preachers and elders...in the Lord’s church who teach error on fundamental doctrines—doctrines about which one must be right in order to be saved. Such men must be opposed, and those outside of the church who teach error must also be opposed. It is a grievous error to suppose that by merely pretending that there are no false teachers and there are no false doctrines, God’s pleasure will rest upon us if we do nothing about false doctrines and false teachers.

Many Christians, it seems, adopt a “holier-than-thou” attitude simply on the ground that they—in contrast to some others—never engage in any kind of controversy. Brother B.C. Goodpasture once told me about a preacher who said to him, referring to the pulpit work with a certain congregation, “as long as I am in this pulpit, nothing controversial will ever be preached.” There are a number of things wrong with this statement. In the first place, no one can preach the whole counsel of God without preaching that which is controversial, at least with some persons. In the second place, such sentiment is directly opposed to the sentiment (and actions) enjoined upon men in Jude 3!

Since no one can defend the faith without presenting sound arguments, then it is obvious that Jude 3 demands that men both recognize and honor the Law of Rationality.

—Thomas B. Warren
Deceased